

Message Text

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ACTION STR-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 STRE-00 FEA-01 AGR-05

CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FRB-03 H-02

INR-07 INT-05 L-03 LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 AID-05

CIEP-01 SS-15 ITC-01 TRSE-00 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02

OMB-01 EUR-12 /113 W

----- 013207

R 260002Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5818

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

MTN GENEVA 204

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SINGAPORE 3536

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, MTN, SN

SUBJECT: TROPICAL PRODUCTS NEGOTIATIONS - SINGAPORE

REFS: (A) STATE 141388, (B) SINGAPORE 0049

SUMMARY: EMBOFF CALLED ON DEPARTMENT OF TRADE OFFICIALS TO PRESENT U.S. POSITION ON TROPICAL PRODUCTS NEGOTIATIONS CONTAINED REFTEL A. GOS OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, WERE CLEARLY NOT IMPRESSED WITH U.S. TROPICAL PRODUCTS ARGUMENTS; THEY INDICATED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT GOS IS COMMITTED TO OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES TO REJECT TROPICAL PRODUCTS RECIPROCITY, AND THAT U.S. TROPICAL PRODUCTS OFFER TO SINGAPORE IS OF NEGLIGIBLE VALUE. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY OFFICERS JULY 21 CALLED ON TAN SONG CHUAN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF DEPARTMENT OF TRADE, AND SENIOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.
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TOR ANTHONY CHENG TO REVIEW U.S. POSITION IN TROPICAL PRODUCTS

NEGOTIATIONS IN CONTEXT REFTEL A.

2. GOS OFFICIALS POLITELY LISTENED TO U.S. RATIONALE, BUT INDICATED THAT SINGAPORE HAD MADE COMMITMENT TO ASEAN NOT TO BREAK RANKS ON QUESTION OF RECIPROCITY: SINGAPORE'S DELEGATE IN GENEVA, TAN KENG JIN, HAS THEREFORE BEEN INSTRUCTED "IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS" NOT REPEAT NOT TO OFFER CONCESSIONS TO U.S. IN TROPICAL PRODUCTS CONTEXT.

3. WHEN EMBOFF WONDERED ALOUD IF SINGAPORE'S POSITION ON RECIPROCITY WAS CONSISTENT WITH TYPICAL SINGAPORE PRAGMATISM, TAN REPLIED THAT TROPICAL PRODUCTS WERE REALLY NOT OF GREAT INTEREST TO SINGAPORE: MOST OF ITEMS IN GOS REQUEST LIST WERE ACTUALLY SUBMITTED TO SUPPORT REQUEST LISTS OF ASEAN NEIGHBORS (SEE REFTEL B FOR PREVIOUS REPORTING OF SINGAPORE'S DISINTEREST IN TROPICAL PRODUCTS). CHENG THEN PULLED OUT U.S. OFFER LIST, AND POINTED OUT ITEMS OF INTEREST TO SINGAPORE WHICH HAD BEEN LEFT OFF, E.G. FRESH FLOWERS, CHOCOLATES, AND PINE-APPLES. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT PLYWOOD WAS ON THE LIST, BUT CHENG COUNTERED THAT SINGAPORE ALREADY HAS GSP TREATMENT ON THIS ITEM, AND MFN TREATMENT WOULD ULTIMATELY BENEFIT CANADIAN EXPORTS AT SINGAPORE'S EXPENSE. TAN THEN REMARKED THAT WHEN YOU COME DOWN TO BRASS TACKS, THE U.S. TROPICAL PRODUCTS OFFER IS "A JOKE" FROM ASEAN POINT OF VIEW.

4. EMBOFF THEN ASKED IF SINGAPORE WOULD CONSIDER OFFERING CONTRIBUTIONS IF USG OFFER LIST WAS MORE ATTRACTIVE. GOS ANSWER AGAIN WAS FIRMLY NEGATIVE.

5. GOS DEPARTMENT OF TRADE OFFICIALS ARE OBVIOUSLY WELL INFORMED ON BOTH DETAILS AND RATIONALE OF USG TROPICAL PRODUCTS NEGOTIATING POSITION. EQUALLY OBVIOUS LDC (AND ESPECIALLY ASEAN) CONSIDERATIONS FAR OUTWAY WHAT GOS PERCEIVES AS TRIVIAL BENEFITS OF U.S. TROPICAL PRODUCTS OFFER.

6. COMMENT: EMBOFF LEFT WITH GOS OFFICIALS A BRIEF PAPER OUTLINING U.S. TROPICAL PRODUCTS POSITION ALONG LINES REFTEL A. HOWEVER, PROBLEM HERE IS NOT THAT OUR POSITION IS UNCLEAR, BUT THAT SINGAPORE CLEARLY SEES IT AS A CASE OF LITTLE TO GAIN AND MUCH TO LOSE.

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7. IN GENERAL, GOS TRADE OFFICIALS IN THIS MEETING TOOK A HARDER THAN USUAL LINE ON DC/LDC RELATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, THEY EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH DEVELOPED COUNTRY GSPPS. THEY ALSO WERE CRITICAL OF U.S. EMBARGO ON TRADE WITH VIETNAM, AND EXPRESSED UNHAPPINESS OVER RECENT PROTECTIONIST POLICIES, CITING SPECIFICALLY AUSTRALIA (TEXTILES) AND FRANCE (ELECTRONICS).
HOLDRIDGE

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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